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THE

OFFICERS AND MEMBERS

OF THE

Plymouth Society of Keokuk,

WITH THE

ORATION AND POEM

DELIVERED AT THE

CELEBRATION OF FOREFATHERS' DAY,

DECEMBER 22D, 1858.

KEOKUK:
DAILY GATE CITY OFFICE PRINT.
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ORATION.

BY J. R. BRIGGS, JR.

THERE seems to spring instinctively within the human breast, a love for the land whereon our eyes first opened to the light. Patriotism is a natural and important sentiment. Upon it depends the defence of the State, the welfare of society, and the safety and happiness of the individual. The foundation of patriotism is local attachment,—a fondness for one's kindred and neighborhood. My friends, we should be less than patriots, less than men, did we forget that spot of earth from whence our wandering feet departed. This is why, though we are true and loyal to the Great Republic, our hearts yet turn to our New England homes, faithfully as the trembling needle to the pole. This is why, as grateful children, we are met in memory of the men who gave us a home and a country, upon the day when first they stood upon the soil of the strange, new world.

We of New England, without disparagement of others, may indulge a just and honest pride in the stock from whence we have sprung. Our fathers possessed a force of character, with distinguishing and enviable traits, which has moulded and fixed forever the spirit and tendencies of the community which they planted. In what the peculiarities of that character consisted, and how it chanced to seek the new world as the theatre of its display, are topics to which we will briefly turn.

Our fathers were Puritans. The Pilgrims to the new world were the Puritans of the old. And who

and what were the Puritans? Not, I think, a class of men of whom Republicans and free inquirers need be ashamed. Early in the history of England there were found in the church sincere and pious men who protested against its superstitions, and to what seemed to them its tyrannical conduct and its worldly greed. They wished to render it stainless, and wholly spiritual; to weed out error, to correct abuses, and to guard against the encroachments of spiritual tyranny and worldly ambition. Their primary motive was unexceptionable and commendable. They were no enemies to the church. They were its truest and sincerest friends. They had no desire to impair its influence or to limit its just authority. They sought, by establishing and maintaining the spirit of reform, to perfect the one and extend the other. But in the exercise of this pious and commendable spirit, they were unconsciously commencing in the bosom of the church a struggle which was to be prolonged for centuries, and finally to terminate in the grandest results, not only to the Church and State of England, but to the world. They cannot be greatly praised or greatly blamed. Their motives and their aims were good. But they had no consistently-digested scheme, and were not consciously rendering themselves parties to a long-continued contest. They simply acted as good and zealous men with clear understandings will always and every where act,—spontaneously, from a sense of right and justice. They were not designedly initiating a contest for the vindication of truth and purity. It was simply an expression of sentiment and an exercise of influence uttered and exerted in the presence of what was, or seemed to be, error and abuse in the body of which they were members, entertaining a common interest. In the presence of error and wrong, men will always divide, and incline to this side or to that, as conscience or interest or under-

standing prompts. They took position, as others take it. That is the extent of their merit, or their offence, from whichever point of view their conduct is examined. It was their merit, as I believe. But, consciously or unconsciously, designedly or undesignedly, a struggle was actually commenced in the church which was to grow in depth and intensity with the lapse of time, developing and defining principles and dividing its members, until it was found both undesirable and impossible for the two opposing parties to which the contest was substantially narrowed, to remain within the pale of the same communion. In fact, principles and sentiments became so sharply defined, were found to be so pointedly opposed, and were so zealously defended, that one party *would not* remain, while the other excommunicated them in scorn. The progress of the movement, with the gradual development of principles and the clear division of parties, from its first inception to its ultimate issue, is at once interesting and important. But it is the province of the historian, and not of the casual reviewer. The party of reform, who sought to correct abuses and resist usurpation, from the nature of their conscienceious objections were called Puritans. During the controversy, they were led on from point to point in examination and discussion, until the grounds and nature of authority and prescription in Church and State, the elements and character of Christian truth and discipline and of theological dogmas were passed in review and sifted to the bottom. The final and fixed opinions of the Puritans, and the spirit which prevailed among them, I will endeavor to define. They tolerated no ceremony unless it was specially enjoined by the word of God. They were zealous advocates for the independence of the churches. They admitted no authority but the Bible. The Bible alone was their fixed and infallible rule. They read it for them-

selves, and would allow neither Parliament, hierarchy nor King to interpret it for them. They maintained the equality of the clergy. They scouted the doctrine of the divine right and superior authority of the bishops. Formal garments and signs they rejected, because they were badges of a party they opposed, signs that authority was to prevail over reason and to control inquiry. This was the true spirit of the great continental Protestant movement. And the Puritans were the true and effective champions of the Protestant cause in England. Nay, their own movement, independently begun and contemporaneously fought out, would have been conducted to the same result, sooner or later, had Luther never lived, or Germany never revolted from the Catholic Church. It is not too much to say that it is due to the Puritans that the English people became Protestant. But the same spirit which formed their religious convictions, determined the tendencies and fixed the character of their political sentiments. They led the party of the people. They become the opponents of kingly as they were of ghostly tyranny. The established church sustained the prerogatives of the King, and the kingly order. They maintained the doctrines of divine right and passive obedience. The Church and the King were at one. On the other hand, the Puritans became the guardians of popular liberty. They left their impress not less marked and permanent upon the British laws and constitution, than upon the religious feeling and policy of the times. If they rendered it impossible for the English Church to fall back into Papal subordination, and to continue in the belief and practice of many prominent requirements of the Church of Rome, so they exploded forever in the British mind the doctrine that the King could do no wrong, and they made it a part of the national undestanding, that Parliament, the People, or the Commonwealth could rule as

truly by the grace of God as a crowned and titled monarch. Since their day it is conceded that upon great occasions Parliament can lawfully change the succession, or declare the throne to be vacant, while passive obedience has become a term that requires the consultation of history to understand. How much that is good and true in the religious life of the people of England, how much that is just and enduring in the public law and political sense of England, which sprung from the reflection, the resolution, and the power of the Puritans, the historian delights to display, for it is a theme over which his heart can expand and his pen grow eloquent. They had their extravagancies of conduct and sentiment, and their ludicrous side, it is true. And so had their opponents. The literature of the times has embalmed it all. But who now turns with least delight to the record of the former, or finds less to forgive in the latter?

But there came a time in the development of sentiment, in the formation of opinions, and in the decision of conduct, when the protesting Puritans, equally obnoxious to the priestly and the kingly power, were no longer safe and free under English rule. Their thoughts were denied expression. They were forbidden to worship God, except after an established form. Their congregations were broken up. Their ministers were executed, imprisoned, or exiled. A month's absence from the service of the establishment, subjected them to interrogation, to suspicion as non-conformists, and to the menace of exile or death. They could do nothing that they would. They were compelled to do that they would not. A colony went to Holland, from thence to Switzerland, and finally returned. In the year 1602, near the close of the reign of Elizabeth, a congregation in the north of England, under charge of John Robinson, despairing of such reforms in the national church as their consciences required, formed

themselves into an independent body. The record of their decision is simple and sincere. Hear it: They resolved, "whatever it might cost them, as the Lord's free people, to join themselves by covenant into a church state." They were Calvinists in faith, but they refused to wear any human name. They reserved the perpetual liberty of modifying their faith and practice according to the light they acquired. And they took the Bible as their sole authority. Men of New England! mark the words, give heed to the spirit, and watch the wanderings of this little flock, for it is the seed from which you have sprung. They were persecuted, like their brethren. They were "harassed by imprisonments, search-warrants, and trivial prosecutions." At length, weary of persecution, longing for rest, they resolved to seek the free worship of God in a foreign land. They turned their eyes to Holland, where others of the brethren had previously found peace. William Brewster, a ruling elder in the church, had resided as a diplomatist there, and many common sympathies with that people led them to select the Low Countries as their future home. In 1607 they made an attempt to emigrate thither. But they were not permitted to leave. The officers of the law arrested and detained them. Another attempt was made in 1608, which was successful. By previous and secret arrangement, they met at night on a lonely moor, and under cover of darkness, in the midst of a raging storm, they escaped from an oppression that denied them the poor privilege of voluntary exile. They landed at Amsterdam. From thence they removed to Leyden. There they remained eleven years. They were years of harmony and happiness. They enjoyed their religion undisturbed. They commanded the esteem of the community in which they were located. Even the nuncio of Rome spoke of them with respect. The fame of their Pastor and the liberty of

his people attracted new members to the church from England. But notwithstanding all this, they were unsatisfied. The language and manners of the Dutch were unpleasant. They disliked the climate. The dissolute habits of the disbanded soldiers employed in the late wars, was corrupting to their young. Nor were they content to occupy so subordinate a position. They were conscious of qualifications for a higher rank and a wider influence than was open to them in a foreign land. And besides, they were Englishmen, and wished to live where English laws, language and customs prevailed. They thought of the new world, and resolved to plant a colony in America. After much difficulty in the arrangement of preliminaries, they finally procured two vessels, the Speedwell and the Mayflower, in which, on the 22d of July, 1620, the greater portion of their number embarked at Delft-Haven. They arrived at Southampton, where they remained several days, leaving on the 5th of August. The Speedwell suffered damage, and they put into the port of Dartmouth for repairs. Remaining in port eight days, they sailed again. When fairly out of sight of land, afloat upon the high seas, in a new and almost untraveled path, the Captain and company of the Speedwell, dismayed at the enterprise, feigned further damage, and they returned again to Dartmouth. Then the little band was winnowed of all waverers. The timid were left in the harbor with the Speedwell. The resolute and strong-hearted all went aboard of the Mayflower, and on the 6th of September one hundred and one human souls bade adieu to their native land forever. They had a long and tedious voyage. For sixty-three days their little vessel was tossed up on the billows of the Atlantic. Their design was to land in Virginia, but they lost their position, and on the 9th of November they entered the harbor of Cape Cod. Spending some time in the exploration of the

coast, they finally, on Monday, the 22nd day of December, two hundred and thirty-eight years ago this day, entered the bay of Plymouth. The season was dreary, desolate and forbidding. Without it was stormy, and gloomy, and cold. But it was warm, and tranquil, and cheerful within. Leading their wives and carrying their little ones, they waded through the chill December waters, to a rocky shore, sheeted with ice and snow, where, dripping with wet, tinkling with new-made icicles, uncovering their heads to the winter wind, on bended knees they thanked Almighty God for his exceeding love. Such was the unpromising advent of the Pilgrims to the land upon which their sufferings, their virtues and their achievements have shed an enduring renown. They have been called zealots and enthusiasts. But it should be borne in mind that they were not an ignorant and intellectually undisciplined company; they were not inexperienced young men and maidens in the glow of life; they were men of learning, of experience in the world's rough ways, of grave and considerate deportment, who had brought their wives and their families, well appreciating the toils and the trials that laid before them. Removed from the possibility of human succor, should perils overtake them, short of provisions, with no shelter to cover their heads, they looked out upon a wintry desert with unquailing hearts and unmurmuring lips. Surely the enthusiasm that sustained such men, under such circumstances, was an enthusiasm that the good and the brave might envy and admire.

Before leaving the vessel, a complete political organization was effected, satisfactory to all. A constitution, or bill of rights and declaration of purposes, was agreed upon, committed to writing and subscribed by all. That declaration, in its comprehensiveness and spirit, is a model for any age, and a marvel for that. In the true and just sense of a constitution, re-

ceiving the sanction of all and recognizing the rights of all, this was the first. It rested upon the broad basis of "equal laws" for the "general good." In the cabin of the Mayflower popular constitutional liberty was born. John Carver was unanimously chosen Governor for the year. Their old Pastor, the pious and faithful Robinson, did not sail with his flock. He was intending soon to follow; but ere preparation was complete, he departed upon another voyage for a brighter shore. The church was placed under the care of Bradford and Brewster. So that, so far as organization and concert of action was concerned, in all that related to their civil and religious life, every thing was complete, perfect and satisfactory, when the Pilgrims encamped upon the snows of New England. The winter which followed was long and severe. The building of houses at that inclement season was difficult. The constant exposure created colds and consumptions, and but half the little colony survived until spring. Their provisions soon dwindled away, and it seemed for a period as though death by starvation was inevitable. At one time they were reduced to a pint of parched corn, which gave to each individual five kernels. Still their cheerful trust in the mercies of Providence remained unshaken. But the winter passed. The summer came. The earth yielded its fruits. Necessities were provided for, and happier prospects and brighter days broke upon that little band. They labored long, and diligently, and they found what they thought was success. They were at peace. They worshiped God in their own way. But at the end of ten years the colony had not increased to above three hundred souls. However, it was a vigorous germ of the new civilization. Others of like sympathies were attracted hither, in a few years, and the career of the Puritans in the new world opened upon a broader scale.

There are two topics to which I here desire to direct attention, for they furnish the key to the general spirit which has prevailed in New England from the landing of the forefathers to the present day, and which will continue to prevail so long as the seemingly ineradicable influence of the fathers exists. I mean the particular and authentic basis of the political and religious organizations established by the Plymouth colonists.

The nature of their primary constitution, I have already alluded to. It recognized no distinctions in community. All were equal before the laws, in respect of rank, of rights, and of power. A Governor was elected annually, by universal suffrage. He was powerless, except he acted by consent of a council, first of five, afterwards of seven, who were selected as his advisers and assistants. In the council he had two votes. For more than eighteen years "the whole body of the male inhabitants" constituted the legislature; and when at last extent of territory rendered this practice inconvenient, the representation of the people was large. Supreme power was lodged in the hands of the people. Not only were the judges elected directly by them, but when they chose, as they generally did, upon important occasions, both executive and judicial questions were decided by popular vote. Such were the character and guaranties of popular civil liberty in the Old Colony.

The character of their theology was equally free, within the recognized limits of authority. The foundation of the Government, was human rights. The foundation and sole authority of the Church, was the Bible. The charge of Robinson, as he bade adieu to his flock at Delft-Haven, on the point of sailing, explains their position specifically and clearly. Let me read an extract from it: "I charge you, before God and his blessed angels, that you follow me no further

than you have seen me follow the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord has more truth yet to break forth out of his holy word. I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of the reformed churches, who are come to a point in religion, and will go at present no further than the instruments of their reformation. Luther and Calvin were great and shining lights in their times, yet they penetrated not into the whole counsel of God. I do beseech you, remember it,—'tis an article of your covenant,—that you be ready to receive whatever truth shall be made known to you from the written word of God."

It was in such a spirit and upon such a platform that the Old Colony commenced the settlement and civilization of New England. The colony at Plymouth, however, did not long comprise, either wholly or mainly, the Puritan population of New England. The sentiments and influences which make up the sum of New England character did not all spring from them. But the colonies which succeeded, were prompted to emigrate by the same spirit which they had been, partially quickened thereto by the accounts which they had transmitted to their friends in England, of their peace, their quiet progress, and the hopes before them. The regulations among their neighbors were not in detail identical with their own. Yet they were nearly so. And whether in the religious faith and spirit or in the political notions and practices of New England at the present time, we should endeavor to recognize the precepts and regulations of one colony or another, we should be equally successful. What New England became, in civil and religious life, was not so much the consequence of a compromise among separate colonies, as of a similar spirit pervading the whole. Therefore, though it is in particular honor of the settlers at Plymouth that Forefathers' Day is kept on the 22nd of December,—the anni-

versary of their landing,—in the few remaining remarks which I have to make, I shall comprise among the fathers all the early settlers who gave life and form to New England character.

The general spirit of their civil and religious life I have stated in stating that of the Plymouth colonists. They were jealous of the centralization of political power, and of the effect of delegating it for long periods. Therefore they shared the executive power between a nominal executive and a council elected both for the purpose of restraint and advice. This will explain the office, anomalous to many, which still exists in most or all of the New England States, none of those earliest formed feeling at all inclined to part with it. Therefore, too, the annual election of all the officers,—a practice which is still continued with respect to all those in whom the least political power is lodged. And therefore the resumption and exercise of supreme power by the people on all occasions where the importance of the principle or the extent of the popular interest rendered it desirable. The political institutions are still as simple as they can possibly be rendered. The legislative representation is still larger than in any community in the world. And so much of the original spirit has been preserved,—so deeply was it planted,—that there is no inclination to extend the term or enlarge the extent of delegated power, or to limit the ratio of representation faster than the increase of population absolutely demands. The governments originally were, and still are, as near to being absolute democracies as circumstances render it possible. And I may also add, they still are, as they originally were, the most just, satisfactory and stable governments that ever were instituted among men. All this is the work of our fathers' hands. They bequeathed us the institutions. They transmitted the precepts upon which they are founded,—the spirit

which breathes through them. Theirs is the merit. Is it not rare and great? Were they not true and sagacious men? That school of English turmoil and revolution, terrible to human fortitude and human sensibilities, had not tried and tempered and taught them for nothing. In them it bore peaceful and precious fruits. Is it not with ample cause, considered from the political point of view alone, that we revere their memory and perpetuate their fame? But they were as jealous of the centralization of religious power, as they were of civil. The church was no less a democracy than the state. Sole and supreme power resided in the whole congregation of believers. Nothing was done without their authority, and all business was transacted in open meeting, by free discussion and equal suffrage. Each church was an independent body. They were watchful of the usurpations of the priesthood. The clergy were not permitted to exercise the least authority not specially reposed in them. No clerical association was tolerated. Every thing that looked to associated or concerted effort on the part of the clergy was rigorously prohibited. Even associate meetings for mutual counsel and improvement were looked upon with so much suspicion that the few attempts to establish them were speedily abandoned. Their policy was effectual. The people remained masters of the church as well as of the state. That may be right, or it may be wrong. I was taught to believe it right, and the reflections of my manhood have strengthened the teachings of my childhood. But that is a point I am not here to argue. I simply state the fact. There either were no Christian churches in New England, or the people were the rulers thereof.

And in this connection, it is proper to speak of the religious intolerance imputed to them. The charge is true. They were intolerant. I do not deny it.

It would be folly to deny the record of their official acts. They passed laws expelling those who disagreed from them in religious opinion, and punishing them if they refused to leave. I know the defence is set up for them that they came here to enjoy their peculiar religion. That they desired no member to join their community who did not agree with them in matters of religious faith. That they wished merely to be let alone. And it is true. They were simply intolerant,—they did not persecute. They sought not to compel people of another faith to receive their own. They never punished for opinion, as such. They only sought to exclude from their asylum such as disagreed with them. But the argument only amounts to an excuse. It is not a defence. At home they preached toleration. It underlaid the whole argument which they spread before the world. They were bound to practice their own precepts, or recant. They had no right. in nature and in reason, to establish a free civil community from which people were to be excluded on account of religious sentiment. We do not enter the civil state alone from choice. We are born into it. But whether we enter it voluntarily or involuntarily, our rights as citizens are independent of our peculiar religious tenets. So our fathers taught. And they practised otherwise. But besides the excuse I have adverted to, there are two others which may be given in their behalf. First: They lived in an intolerant age. That I am aware of, full tolerance, at that time, was granted no where. Quakerism was not yet developed, and Pennsylvania was not yet founded. It is true that perfect religious toleration is claimed to have been established in Maryland. But in that colony people holding the sentiments of those who are wont to worship in this house, were by law liable to execution. For the sentiments which I entertain, my own head might have been rolled from the block.

They were in error. But they only shared the common error of the times,—an error from which the human mind had not then fully escaped. Nay, from which it has not yet escaped, except in some small degree. Second: They were practically tolerant of all opinions except towards those who made themselves unreasonably offensive. A man might entertain any opinion he chose, might worship God in any way agreeable; if only he conducted himself decently and orderly, he was undisturbed. The case of Roger Williams, a Puritan of the Puritans, is not an exception to this statement. I esteem his position right. I honor him for his adherence to it. But it was not for the indulgence of consciencious opinions that he was expelled. If he did not form an exception to the rule, much less did those people called Quakers, who suffered at the hands of our fathers. In point of fact, they were not Quakers. The doctrines of Fox, Barclay and Penn were only just making their way over here. These people accepted them, with little knowledge of their character, and less appreciation of their real spirit. Their conduct was scandalous, inexcusable and provoking. They cried to the magistrates and ministers in the streets, from windows and doors. They derided the institutions of the country. They denounced New England worship as an abomination. They interrupted public worship. They ran naked through the streets. For this they were warned to leave. If they had left, they would have gone unpunished. Even after the sentence, they had their choice to leave or suffer. Only such as these suffered. Nay, not all of these, but only four; for the infliction of capital punishment upon these four, much as they had done to provoke it, and little as was the sympathy to which they were entitled, roused the feelings of the people, brought them to a realizing sence of their attitude, and made an end of all penalties for relig-

ious opinion. This was the answer our fathers made to the charge of intolerance. Carried to its end, they saw the inevitable consequences of intolerance. They shrank from them. They admitted the error and repealed the laws. In fact, it was only in part of the colonies that intolerance existed at all. Connecticut, in particular, an offshoot from Plymouth, and Rhode Island of course, were always free from it. This is the extent of our fathers' offence. Not great, indeed. But does not the blemish seem greater from its appearing upon so spotless a character!

They were men of sterling virtues. Religion was the chief topic of their consideration. And it was a matter of personal concern. The requirements of the Bible were the law of their life. They sought to regulate every act, every thought, every emotion thereby. What saith the scripture? was a question forever on their lips or in their hearts. Since the days of the Apostles, no men have lived who consulted the commands of the Lord Jesus more faithfully and perpetually than they. And the profundity of the religious sentiment left its impress upon their private character and the social state to a wonderful extent. It is written, "one might live there from year to year and not see a drunkard, or hear an oath, or meet a beggar."

They are too often thought of as a stern and hard-browed race. But it is an error. It is true, they were rigorous and exacting, of themselves and others, in the performance of every moral duty. They set their faces resolutely to the conquest of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Their spirits were high and strong. Their aims uncompromising as they were elevated. But they were a benevolent and affectionate people. Their hearts were alive to all the nobler impulses and finer feelings of mankind. Family attachments were strong. The punishment of the vicious was mild and

reformatory. The slave-trade was forbidden on pain of death. Even cruelty to animals was a criminal offence. When they could not assist their suffering brethren, at home or abroad, by a contribution of means, they held fasts and offered prayers in their behalf. Their sympathy with the weak, the suffering and the erring was keen and lively. But it was not a morbid sympathy,—the sympathy of weaklings and sentimentalists. It was an intelligent and manly sympathy,—as robust as it was hearty and human. In all the softer graces and amenities of life, they were no more deficient than in the homely and rigorous virtues.

They were the friends of universal education. To their minds, education was the handmaid of religion, and the surest support of the state. They did not expect to maintain the religion that they loved and the state they established, without enlightening the understandings of those to whom they were to be entrusted. With supreme power, both in secular and sacred affairs, residing in the hands of the people, they appreciated the great importance of popular education. As intellectual beings, also, they set a true value upon the acquisition of knowledge and the development and discipline of the mind. Among their earliest enactments it was provided that "none of the brethren should suffer so much barbarism in their families as not to teach their children and apprentices so much learning as may enable them perfectly to read the English tongue." And it was ordered in all the Puritan colonies "that every township, after the Lord hath increased them to the number of fifty householders, shall appoint one to teach all children to read and write; and where any town shall increase to the number of one hundred families, they shall set up a grammar school; the masters thereof being able to instruct youth so far as they may be fitted for the university."

This was the foundation of the free school system, which has spread over the land; which has attracted the attention of the civilized world, and extended itself to other lands. Puritanism raised the office of the People, and their notions of the necessity of popular education were correspondingly elevated.

In a few words we may sum up their character, as friends of free government, free schools, a free church; lovers of virtue and good order, of industry and frugality; believers in the inviolability of reason and conscience; equable, serene and resolute men, who dealt justly, loved mercy, and walked humbly with their God. They rest from their labors. The soil of New England covers them. But their example and their spirit survive. The 21,200 persons comprised in the Puritan emigration now number as their descendants one-fourth of the white population of this country. In six millions of American people they live again. It might be at once our merit and our pride to imitate their virtues and share their fame.

POEM.

BY ALBERT SUTLIFFE.

The streams which flowed from Pilgrim founts,
  Do they still make our borders green ?
The old war-beacons on her mounts,
  And can they yet be seen ?

The nerve that steeled those Mayflower men,
  The courage of old Bunker Hill,
Say, are they with us now as then,
  Still moving, living still !

Still handed down from sire to son,
  To hearth-fires blazing far away,
How does their influence mould and form
  The Yankee of to-day !

The Yankee ! what strange visions rise !
  What mighty thoughts my soul engage !
Before me stalks, in comic guise,
  The Yankee of the stage.

With figure lean, and nasal speech,
  And breeches brief as brief can be :
So brief their striped beauties reach
  Scarce past his pilgrim knee ;

With face of awful longitude,
  The features soiled, and pinched, and thin,
Yet to some strange expression screwed,
  'Twixt idiot smile and grin,

He asks you, *where?* and *when?* and *how?*
  And *whose?* and *which?* and *why?* and *what?*

And don't you think you'd better, now?
And don't you think you'd better not?

He makes his wares and vends them well;
Nice hams his native forests grew;
Pure spicery, only made to sell,
And always fresh and new.

He buys, he sells, he makes, he mars;
Is priest, or layman, as you will;
Makes pills, or speeches; pettifogs;
Does nothing well nor ill.

He travels; sees St. James, St. Paul's;
"Guesses" what some old master means;
In Paris *cafes* gawks, and calls
Aloud for pork and beans.

He clambers up Vesuvius;
The lava billows fall and rise;
With legs hung o'er the abyss he dreams
Of home and pumpkin pies.

He seeks the Nile's far distant springs;
He roams the desert simoom-blown;
He hails across the Russian steppes
The Czar upon his throne.

He roams the eastern hemisphere
From far Cathay to sunny Spain;
He grasps, without a thought of fear,
The British lion's mane.

He questions every one he meets,
French savans none can understand,
He asks its riddle of the Sphinx
Among its wastes of sand.

He beats you down a sou in price;
Gives bogus coin in charities;
He offers on the Paris Bourse
Western securities.

Does all things stupid, all things mean ;
  Says every thing *mal-a-propos;*
Is sometimes sharp, is *always* green,
  Is all the world's *bon mot.*

The footlights vanish from my sight ;
  The Yankee of the stage is gone ;
Around me falls the pleasant light
  Of the fair mid-day sun.

I see instead before me rise
  New England homes, New England hills ;
Above, her blue Italian skies,
  Below, her silver rills,

The snow-white church among the trees,
  The school-house by the village green,
The clover field hummed o'er by bees,
  The mountains dimly seen.

I hear her many sounds of toil ;
  The muffled axe in valleys deep ;
The distant city's wild turmoil
  That breaks the forest's sleep.

Her water-courses fierce and strong,
  Her million spindles whizzing free,
And, mingling ever with their song,
  The grand voice of the sea.

That sea which bears with wave and wind
  Her handiwork to distant lands ;
Which links her to the farthest Ind
  As if with iron bands.

The toilsome sea, which nerves with steel
  The hardy tars that plough its wave ;
The chainless sea, which teaches well
  Its lessons to the brave.

New England homes, in valleys deep,
  Or on your hill-tops maple-crowned,

Whether the June skies o'er you sleep,
Or winter howls around,

Still are ye happy, still serene;
The summer can not give more joy,
Nor fierce December, blowing keen,
Your inward peace destroy.

For, O, these long close-curtained eves,
In which the soul of comfort dwells,
I find on memory's well-worn leaves
No picture loved so well.

'Tis winter; such a night as this;
The darkness slowly settles down
On field, and grove, and wilderness,
And busy-peopled town.

Now o'er some quiet country home
The thickening shadows peaceful lie;
The roadside poplars, straight and tall,
Stand up against the sky;

The timid fowls are sheltered well,
The cattle stalled and amply fed:
Fuel, to last till ten o'clock,
Brought from the well-filled shed.

The hearth is swept, the tea is drawn,
The table set for the repast.
A Yankee kitchen—it is years,
Since, friends, you saw one last.

The pleasant firelight cheers the room;
It lights the nicely-sanded floor,
The ceiling, dark with time and smoke,
The quaintly-paneled door.

Those high-backed chairs which ancient dames,
Beruffed and powdered, used to fill;
You think that by these flickering flames
You see them sit there still.

The bookcase with its volumes worn ;
The Pilgrim's Progress, Baxter's Rest,
The Book of Martyrs, somewhat torn,
A novel—but a guest.

The old king's-arm that saw the wars
Distant, shines dimly in the blaze,
With simples culled for winter use,
And bunches of the maize.

The dresser on the mantle-piece
Throws back the light with conscious pride;
A tall brass antique candlestick
Stands upon either side.

That stately clock, a century gone
It saw a great grandfather dead,
It saw the flash of British steel,
It heard the whiz of lead.

The meal is o'er, the table cleared,
They gather closer round the light ;
The father reads some tale aloud,
The children's eyes shine bright.

Or if they con the morrow's task,
The mother, knitting all the while,
Upon their rosy faces looks
With quiet, hopeful smile.

Perchance a neighbor comes to bring
Some news he at the village learned.
John Smith, the spendthrift, left last spring,
Has just this day returned.

They fetch from out the winter's hoard
The walnuts gathered in the fall ;
The red-cheeked apples, nicely stored,
A ready feast for all.

'Tis eight o'clock ; the children gone,
The parents sit the fire before,

And think of what the past has done,
  And of the future's store.

They talk about the neighborhood :
  " 'Tis sad that Deacon Brown is dead ;
No deed of his were well undone,
  Nor word of his unsaid.

" The peddler marries Sallie Jones,
  That any one could plainly see
Since he went with her on the night
  Of Higby's apple-bee.

" The widow Clark's old cow is dead;
  The ways of God are hard to tell;
I think we'll give her brindle, now;
  'Twill do almost as well."

The clock strikes ten; the house is hushed;
  There's nothing but the stars alight,
Or the huge log upon the hearth
  That smoulders through the night.

New England housewives ! I would fain
  Essay your virtues rare to paint;
My humble muse before the task
  Sinks woe-begone and faint.

For, startled at my effort rash,
  From twenty thousand Yankee tombs,
Full twenty thousand matrons rise,
  All armed with mops and brooms.

A rocky mount of pantaloons
  Before my wondering fancy springs,
With splendid patches on the knees,
  And good enough for kings.

Ten pyramids of pork and beans,
  Fifty square miles of pumpkin pies,
A mighty lake of apple-sauce
  Before me next arise.

A vast array of spinning wheels,
And yarn enough to reach as far
As ten times to the sun, and twice
To the remotest star.

And from these twenty thousand ghosts
A voice upon the wind doth swell,
Which slowly grows articulate:
"We darned and mended well!"

We gather from our homes to light
Our memories' torches at the blaze
Which cheered, that cold December night,
The pilgrims with its rays.

We see again the ancient rock
First pressed by footstep of the free;
Dear rock! stand firm against the shock
Of that wild winter sea.

We hear the solemn, deep-voiced prayer;
The grand, and slowly-swelling hymn,
Rousing the wild beast from his lair
Far in the forest dim.

The silent night is all around;
The closely-curtained sky o'erhead;
For couch, the hard, snow-covered ground,
Which nature's hand hath spread.

And if some heart in anguish turned
Backward across the wintry foam,
And through that solemn darkness yearned
For some dear English home;

Or if some strong man bowed and wept,
With earnest thoughts, too sad to speak,
Silently wept, while others slept,
O, do not think it weak.

Great hearts! they hewed the forest well,
And laid the earth bare to the sun;

Reared sons and daughters for the task,
And slept when they were done.

Brought a new era, whose great truth
Was thought, free thought to all mankind;
The old world found anew its youth,
Before so weak and blind.

Great hearts! true heroes! sinless? no!
The world hath known no perfect man,
Yet greater than the age before,
Truer to God's great plan.

How seem we by those ancient men?
How great, how small, how good, how mean?
And are we worthy of such sires,
True as the world hath seen!

New England sons, O, keep the thrift
Of those who founded mighty states!
They held their threads of destiny;
You hold your future fates.

O, found your cities on a rock!
And build your fortunes slow and sure!
That they may bide the tempest's shock,
And to the end endure.

Make homes, to which a century hence
Your children's children still may turn,
And see, through all the mists of time,
Their holy watchfires burn.

New England daughters, mothers now,
Your mothers were not dressed so fine;
Have you forgot to take that stitch
Which saves the other nine?

Have you still kept that wondrous art
Of rarest skill and wisdom too,
That makes the oldest dresses look
Almost as good as new?

New England daughters of the West,
'Tis yours, that task of heart and brain,
To make your homes and firesides blest,
To live those lives again.

For yonder through the parted clouds,
All brighter than the mid-day sun,
Those angel-mothers wait to say,
"My daughter, 'tis well done."

Brothers and sisters! common ties
And common memories bind us fast;
Upon the threshold of the year
We stand and view the past.

Before us lie our lives of toil,
Behind us dimly stretch the years:
O, let us glean and gather well
Those harvests sown in tears.

And sow broadcast *our own* good deeds,
For distant times in joy to reap;
When we have, in our peaceful graves,
Been centuries asleep.

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